

Newport FD / Depoe Bay RFPD
Collaborative Agreements Committee Meeting Minutes
October 30, 2012

Co-Chairs: Chief Phil Paige, Newport FD
Chief Joshua Williams, Depoe Bay RFPD

Meeting convened at 6:00 pm.

Don Bivens – ESCI Presentation

Don Bivens – Emergency Services Consulting International introduced himself. He noted that ESCI did an original study for six fire departments in Lincoln County that culminated in June and then Newport, Newport Rural and Depoe Bay Fire asked for an additional study focusing on a strategy for those organizations working together. He stated that he has prepared a report tonight outlining the results of that study. He added that this is built as an addition to the main report that was completed in June. He noted that this report assumes that the reader is familiar with the original report and may be confusing if that is not the case. Don stated that we have guests attending tonight from Lane County who have gone through these processes and may be able to lend some experiences that they have had. Don then proceeded with a power point presentation regarding a Partnership Strategy for Newport Fire Department, Newport Rural Fire District and Depoe Bay Rural Fire District. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.

Don stated that ESCI's recommendation concluded from the study is as follows:

- Implement a 190 Intergovernmental Agreement, forming a "Fire Authority
- Consider phasing in Administrative, Functional and Operational implementation
- Either eliminate duplicate positions or phase in salary adjustments for parity

- Follow process as outlined by ORS 190.020 thru 190.085

Don recommended that all parties have legal counsel when moving through this process. He noted that Lane County developed a “Fire Authority” this year and illustrations of the approach they took are found in the ESCI Study for a possible guide to follow. He stated that Lane County Fire Authority is made up of Lane County Fire District #1 and Lane County Rural Fire & Rescue.

Don introduced Chief Terry Ney and Chief Dale Borland along with Chris their EMS Chief, to take questions from the Committee. Chief Ney noted that Special Districts has special authority which means they can do what the Oregon Statutes state and no more...cities on the other hand have general authority and can do whatever they want to do as long as there isn't a statute stating they can't. He noted that this does present a quandary as there will be things that can be done within the city but not in the rural area. He noted it is something to keep in mind especially for the code enforcement people. A discussion followed.

A question about financial contributions to the “Authority” was discussed noting that each entity involved would use a formula to decide how much would be paid. Don stated that we need to look at the level of financial effort from each agency and that ESCI has a lot of experience with sliding scales and can help with working this out. A discussion followed.

Code enforcements were then discussed and a concern was raised that there might not be an even playing field for all parties involved. It was noted that these details are addressed in how the agreements are drawn up.

Chief Ney addressed how they blended the two unions involved in there Fire Authority.

Chief Ney noted that they started the process with an incremental approach on a very informal basis. He stated that they started with casual 190 agreements about one and a half – two years ago. Chief Ney and Chief Borland continued outlining the processes they have gone through since July 1 when the Fire Authority was formed. They noted that Personnel Services remains with the individual Districts and are loaned to the Fire Authority while the Materials and Services portion of each Districts fall under the Fire Authority.

Discussions continued regarding other Fire Districts who have tried combining but have not been successful. It was noted that you always leave an escape clause but it was also strongly recommended that you proceed with the mentality of making it work even when things get tough.

Challenges that Lane County has dealt with and foresee include combining Associations, labor negotiations, reconfiguring dispatch areas and responding groups.

Lane County noted that they started with casual 190 agreements and has progressed to the point where they feel they will have a merge at some future point. They feel taking the time to work the problems out, trying to be 'like-minded', and having the mindset to make it work because it is the right thing to do has helped them to get where they are today. Chief Ney added that the Boards met for about a year prior to the formation of the Fire Authority.

Don noted that ESCI suggests we look at a July 1 deadline to do something and that if this is what we decide, we really need to think about and discuss it now. Don stated that if we decide to model incrementally, we need to treat everyone the same. When Administration is consolidated, we need to learn the tough lessons and treat the next level the same. He continued that egos need to be set aside and leaders need to lead from the front.

Chief Phil Paige noted that our blog is set up but hasn't seen much action yet. He then asked that, if there are no further questions, we move to group reports. Don thanked Chief Ney and Chief Borland for attending tonight's meeting and sharing their experiences.

Group Reports

Chief Paige stated that we have the Strategy G Report from ESCI that will be available on the District's website. He noted that he is impressed with the flexibility of the 190 agreements and feels it gives us the ability to put a package together that we can share and make improvements.

Chief Paige also noted that Central Coast Fire has expressed an interest in joining the Collaborative effort and asked that we consider this request at tonight's meeting.

Stake Holder reports were then given. Some comments are listed below:

- Newport is waiting for proposals
- Questioning about what the Chiefs have decided
- Deployment questions
- Questions on how this collaboration will affect me
- Many different reactions to the collaboration noting we operate very differently and a lot of questions regarding what's going to happen
- 95% of Depoe Bay Volunteers have no issues or concerns
- Rob from Newport noted that he had a hard time getting people to talk to him but once they did he got nothing but dissent with most of it being rooted from ambiguity over where the decision making is coming. His question was if the taxing authorities will be the ones to make the final decisions - Chief Paige answered that the Committee is responsible to put something together that will work and present it to the Boards and Councils for final approval – Rob stated that he thinks part of the problem from the Newport Volunteers is that they already have had a lot of change and change is hard, especially for those who are deeply rooted in tradition – He feels if he can explain to the Volunteers that the decision making process is not coming from within but rather the Boards and Councils it will be better
- Understands the legal terms of the 190 agreements and feels a merger is a concern but feels taking the idea of a Fire Authority back to constituents would be better
- Depoe Bay Fire Board is in full support of what the Committee comes up with and wants to be a part of change
- Newport City Council is waiting for more information before discussing – probably after the first of the year
- Would like the two Fire Chiefs to present several organization models and decision making timelines

Ray Woodard, Board Member from Central Coast Fire, discussed their desire to become a member of the Collaborative Committee. It was noted that they could bring strength to the collaboration through their EMS transport program and bringing in another Chief Officer. A lengthy discussion followed with Chief Williams suggesting we welcome Central Coast Fire to our process. Consensus of the group was in the affirmative.

A discussion on how to proceed was held noting that the best first step would be to look at an Administrative Agreement. Chief Paige and Chief Williams will develop three to four models including administrative functions, organization charts and what the Chiefs would like to see in the 190 agreement. Completed models will be emailed to Committee Members by November 19th.

Next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, November 27, 2012 – 6:00 pm at Central Coast Fire.

Hearing no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm

Respectfully Submitted By:
Phyllis Palmer, Administrative Assistant – Depoe Bay RFPD

Chief Phil Paige

Date

Chief Joshua Williams

Date

